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A Spy's Spy, a Knight vs. Dragon —That Was the Image of James Bond

By Jean White

Staff Reporter

The cult of James Bond is as fierce, violent, and incredible in its loyalty as its hero is in fiction.

Some dozen years ago, James Bond made his first appearance in "Casino Royale" with this introduction:

"The scent and smoke and sweat of a casino are nauseating at three in the morning . . . James Bond suddenly knew that he was tired. He always knew when his body or his mind had had enough, and he always acted on the knowledge. This helped him to avoid staleness and the sensual bluntness that breeds mistakes."

Through a dozen thrillers, Bond never became stale to his followers. And he certainly never suffered sensual bluntness amid episodes spiced with sex, sadistic torture, violence, and gourmet food and wine.

Bondwagon Is Crowded

Millions have jumped on the Bondwagon. Among the devoted followers of Secret Agent 007 have been the late President Kennedy, former CIA Director Allen Dulles, Prince Philip, sophisticated intellectuals, and readers of Mickey Spillane.

The phenomenon of the cult of James Bond has been traced to everything from snobism to sadism.

Many explanations have been put forth: Wish fulfillment (every man would like to be like the urbane, indestructible hero and every woman would like to be seduced by a man like him); escape from the drab humdrum of the regular world of daily



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IAN FLEMING

President Kennedy read Ian Fleming's thrillers and they became required reading for the smart set; modern version of the old knight vs. dragon myth (Bond faces monsters in fiendishly clever villains).

Whatever it was, James Bond had it. His escapades have sold a fantastic 11 million copies.

A Chief Spy's Spy

Even a former chief spy can enjoy the adventures of the super secret agent with the double-0 license to kill. Allen Dulles has a full set of Bond's thrillers in his library, sent as personal gifts from Arthur Fleming.

"He knew his trade," Dulles said yesterday. "Bond was a great fellow. I would like to have a few agents like him."

Fleming did know the trade of spying (as a former intel-

ligence officer) and, however fantastic his plots, wrote his backgrounds with the authenticity of a man who knows what he is writing about. A gambler and golfer and a bridge player, he dissected gambling psychology in "Casino Royale," describes a \$10,000 golf game in "Goldfinger," and concocts a fantastic bridge game in another Bond novel.

Escape From Reality

Like Dulles, many readers read the spy thrillers as an escape into a world where reality could never obtrude.

"It is a fascinating world of fantasy removed from everything," Rep. Charles L. Weltner (D-Ga.), a Bond-man, observed.

Congressman Weltner also has another reason for his devotion — Fleming's adventure plots turn on minor details, "much like politicking, save it isn't a life-or-death matter."

At a dinner party in Washington a few months ago, the talk turned to the modern fictional hero who would be the most likely to develop a devoted cult like the Baker Street Irregulars, who have reconstructed Sherlock Holmes and his quarters down to the Persian slipper.

Michael Coe, professor of anthropology at Yale, agreed that James Bond was the most likely candidate.

Bond, it was decided had the eccentricities to attract such loyalty. He wears custom-made clothes and smokes custom-made cigarettes. He doesn't drive the usual fast sports car of stereotyped adventures, he drives an old Continental Bentley—"the R-type chassis with the Big 6 back-axle ratio" with Arnott super-charger.

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